



Extensive Reading Strategies  
in EFL Classrooms  
A Practical Overview for Enhancing Reading  
Comprehension



Reviewed work:

*Extensive Reading Strategies in EFL Classrooms: A Practical Overview for Enhancing Reading Comprehension* (2016). Fawzi Al Ghazali (Ed.). Saarbrücken, Germany: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing. Pp. 100. ISBN 978-3659829147. \$56.00

Reviewed by

Jeongim Choi

Teachers College, Columbia University  
United States

<http://www.amazon.com>

Myriads of research has shown overwhelming evidence for the importance of extensive reading (ER) in learning to read a second language, but the approach continues to be infrequently used in an English as Second Language (ESL) classroom setting since the concept was introduced in the late 1990s (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 41). Decades later, researchers state that ER is still a less chosen approach, and several challenges of the implementation of ER (e.g., reluctant readers, the change of teachers' role, the change of the classroom culture, and students' academic pressure from the context) are reported (He & Green, 2012). *Extensive Reading Strategies in EFL Classrooms: A Practical Overview for Enhancing Reading Comprehension* is for those who are interested in understanding the effectiveness of the ER approach in Second Language (L2) teaching through exploring theories on reading comprehension and its process. The author reminds us of a wide range of benefits that could be accrued from implementing an ER program and teaching ER strategies while reporting the result of an experimental study. In addition, how an ER program could be integrated into second language curricula and ways to teach ER strategies through task-based pedagogical tasks are well illustrated in this book.

This volume comprises of five chapters, ten appendices, and a list of references. It is written in an effort to identify effective methods to facilitate reading comprehension for English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The author applies both experimental and exploratory methods while examining ways to promote reading comprehension of EFL students in Arab context. It (a) explores theories of reading comprehension and process of reading, (b) establishes a hypothesis based on the major arguments discussed, (c) demonstrates how the enhancement ER program is designed and conducted in the EFL setting, (d) reports the result and analysis of an experimental study, and (e) provides its implications and recommendations.

The first part of the book, Chapter 1, is devoted to a literature review. Since theories with regards to reading comprehension, process of reading, and extensive reading strategies are succinctly illustrated and well condensed in this chapter, it saves some time for those who are new to and not familiar with reading theories and models of ER. The purpose of this part is to set the hypothesis of the study, to corroborate the argument, and to provide the underlying rationale for choosing five extensive reading strategies (e.g., improving reading speed, anticipation, word deduction, skimming, and scanning) and thirteen pedagogical tasks for the experimental enhancement ER program. The author highlights the importance of the students' ability to employ different levels of reading strategies depending on the type of the text and the purpose of reading while pointing out that EFL readers can be classified as fluent and non-fluent readers based on their aptness to apply the appropriate strategy (Spafford & Grosser, 2005). It is claimed that fluent and effective readers apply a combination of both intensive and extensive reading strategies.

Chapter 2 is in line with the preceding chapter, but it particularly focuses on explicating the rationale behind the experimental study, its procedure, and how it was conducted. Preliminary research conducted by the author reveals that United Arab Emirate (UAE) high-school students have a tendency to rely on intensive reading strategies during reading and/or when completing reading comprehension test. The consensus is that fluent readers apply both intensive and extensive approaches depending on the purpose of their reading (Nuttall, 2006), and synchronize the two approaches when the reading purposes interrelate (Brown, 2007). Therefore, the author hypothesizes that teaching ER strategies would benefit the UAE EFL learners who are often mono-strategy in dealing with texts, and inclined to use an intensive approach and bottom-up language processing.

For the enhancement of the ER program during an experimental study, the author focuses on promoting five extensive reading strategies and implements thirteen pedagogical reading tasks to remedy students' preference on applying intensive reading strategies. According to Johnson (2008), improving the comprehension skills of students begins with identifying their weaknesses. Hence, a pre-test and a questionnaire were administered to explicate students' problems in their attempt to construct meaning in the text and their views towards reading. For teachers interested in adopting methods that the author used, examples of tests and questionnaires as well as admonitions while implementing the ER program are provided in this part and in the appendix of the book. Results of these investigations signaled participants' weaknesses: their reading speed, fixation on all unfamiliar items, lack of background knowledge and an ability to deduce the word meaning from the text, and lack of skimming and scanning skills.

With identified areas of participants' shortcomings and skills to be focused on, Chapter 3 moves on to the further explanation of the selected task-based pedagogical reading tasks implemented for the enhancement ER program. Purposes and targeted skills for each task are well delineated with examples, so these reading tasks could easily be utilized with a little modification in EFL classrooms as needed. The author also illustrates how and why collaborative learning technique (CLT) was adopted in the study while demonstrating benefits of using CLT, and claims Task-Based Learning (TBL) works effectively with learners who have certain weaknesses in some

areas of language (Van den Branden, 2006). This chapter provides various ideas for classroom teachers when designing lessons and researchers for further research.

Evaluation of the students' progress is discussed in Chapter 4. Two final tests with different purposes were implemented and the posttest was administered two weeks after the enhancement program ended. The author reports that the results support the given hypothesis. Not particularly surprising, it indicates that there is a significant improvement in students' reading ability. Their comprehension of the written text is enhanced after employing the introduced extensive reading strategies during the enhancement ER program, and the author argues that the acquisition of one strategy supports the other(s). Also, the post-questionnaire indicates a change in students' attitudes toward reading and the students identify many reading strategies and decrease their reliance on intensive reading skills after the ER enhancement program. The correlation between reading comprehension and reading rate is in question based on the result of the study.

In the final chapter, the author highlights the importance of providing miscellaneous extensive reading activities and stresses that the language learning benefits of extensive reading come from quantity of reading (Bamford & Day, 2004). He also stresses constant practice for the retention of the acquired skills and reading strategies. The author's final thoughts include practice of reading skills alone is less effective than the practice interspersed with explanation and comment. He also contends that designing reading tasks in a different way using educational technology would benefit both teachers and learners, and shares his opinion on how the ER program could be improved by providing challenges he encountered during the experiment. Admonitions while implementing the ER program and changes he would make for future research are also given in the final chapter.

As a researcher and a classroom practitioner, it was delightful to witness the administration of the ER program and the evidence of its effectiveness during reading this volume. While there are many activity resource books available for EFL teachers, this book offers a wide range of highly adaptable recipes of an ER program for the second language classroom, and gives us a chance to think over how it should be implemented. One of the most important aspects of this book is that it not only demonstrates how the ER program is integrated into EFL curricula, but also shares its limitations and challenges encountered during the experimental study and provides advice to us. It is also intriguing to read that the author describes reasons for particular extensive reading strategies are more effective than intensive ones while explaining characteristics of reading strategies. I think it might be more interesting if the author elaborated further on this issue. Apart from the efficiency of ER strategies, he acknowledges that both approaches are needed to achieve reading fluency throughout the book.

One might think some of shortcomings of this book are the length of the experimental ER program (one month), the number of the participants (twenty UAE high school students), and the lack of a control group. I may agree with this concern, but the theoretical overview of reading comprehension and reading models and the provided rationale for the experiment show the author's effort, and it was an enjoyable part of this book. Also, some may claim that a couple of the core principles of Extensive Reading (ER), such as the material being self-selected, are neglected during the ER program. The ER program implemented for the experiment could be called Modified ER or Blended ER, which adopts many of the ER principles and focuses on

teaching reading strategies and extensive reading (Day, 2015). In reality, due to the challenges ER program encounters, which were briefly mentioned in the beginning of this review, there are several different forms that the practice of ER might look like. This book illustrates one of the different forms of ER program and provides evidences of effectiveness of the modified ER program. Over all, it delivers on the promise of providing both researchers and classroom practitioners with valuable information regarding ER. It would be an enjoyable reading for both researchers and classroom practitioners who are interested in understanding the effectiveness of ER program and teaching ER strategies, how an ER program could be implemented, and its importance in improving EFL learners' overall linguistic competence as well as their reading ability.

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## About the Reviewer

Jeongim Choi holds an M.A. in Reading Specialist from Teachers College, Columbia University and has been involved in English language teaching since 2005. She is planning to pursue a doctoral degree to continue her study. Her areas of research interest include L2 reading, extensive reading, and L2 pedagogy. E-mail: jeongimia.choi@gmail.com